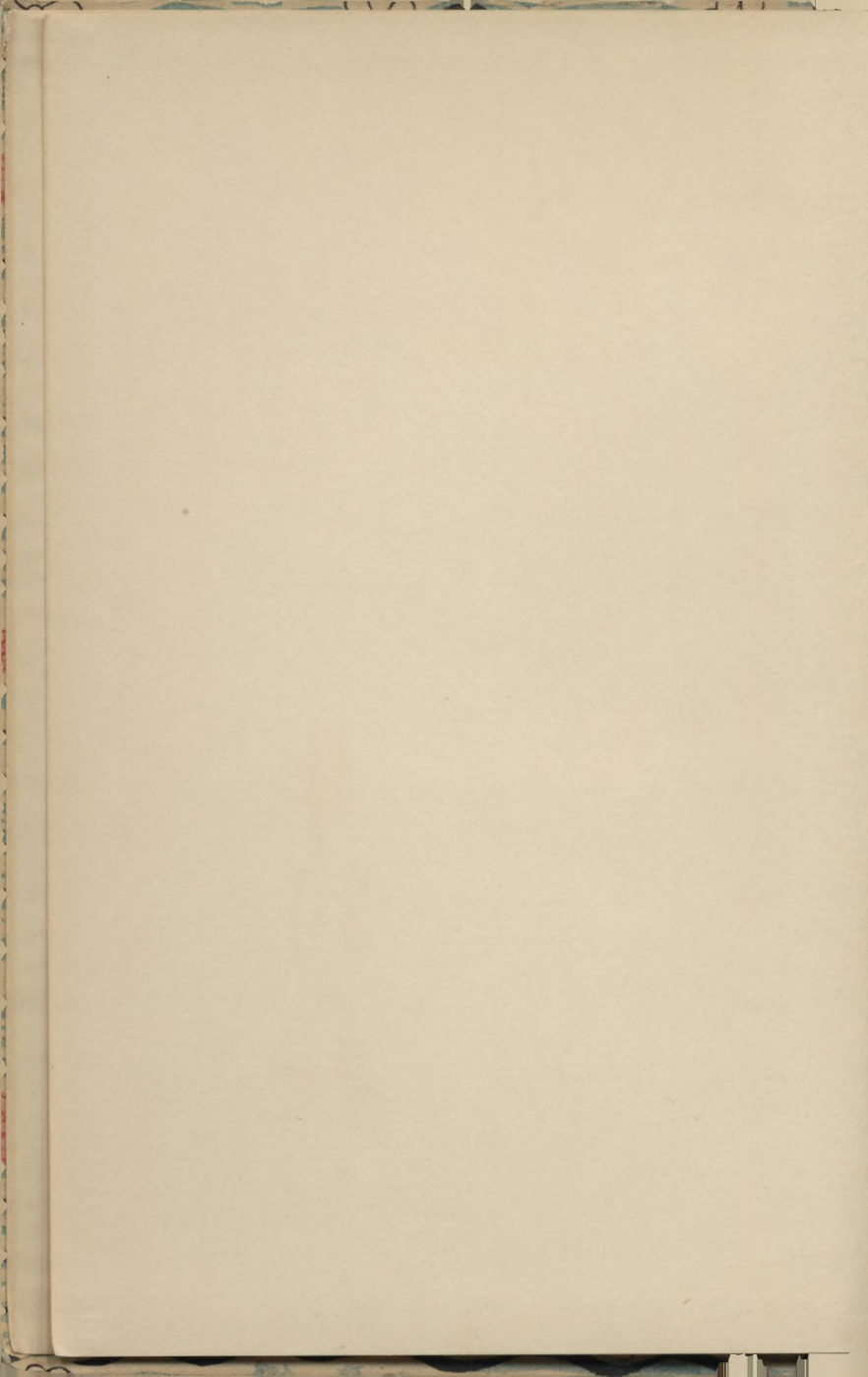


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VOLUME THREE

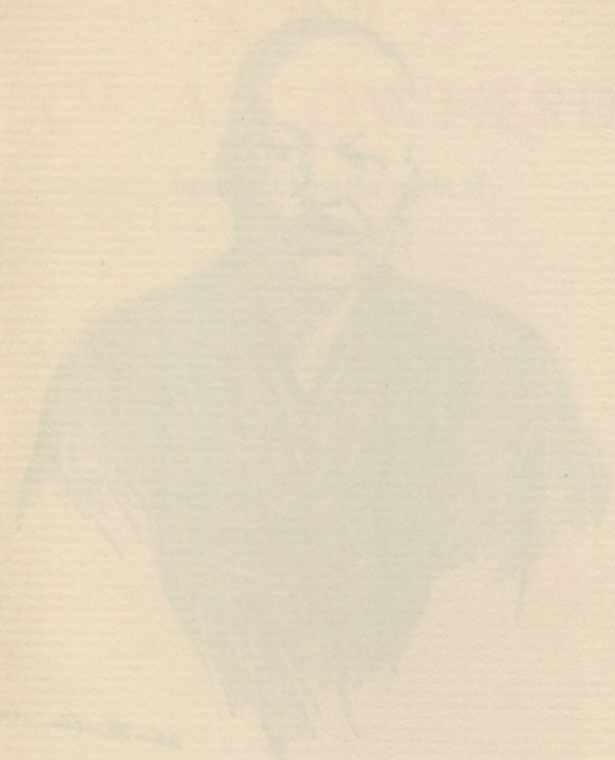


SONGS OF A COWHERD

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ON CARD

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1857-58



SACHIO ITO

1912

SONGS OF A COWHERD

translated from the works of

SACHIO ITO

by

SHIO SAKANISHI, Ph.D.



MARSHALL JONES COMPANY
BOSTON

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To
L. E. S.

MODERN JAPANESE POETS SERIES

Already Published



- I · Takuboku Ishikawa: *A Handful of Sand*
- II · Akiko Yosano: *Tangled Hair*
- III · Sachio Ito: *Songs of a Cowherd*

In Preparation



- IV · Akahiko Shimaki
- V · Hakushu Kitahara
- VI · Mokichi Saito

PREFACE



WESTERN students of Japanese literature have had little opportunity to study the renaissance of poetic inspiration which originated during the closing years of the nineteenth century. It produced such significant writers as Takuboku Ishikawa, Sachio Ito, and Akahiko Shimaki, and among the living poets Mrs. Akiko Yosano, Hakushu Kitahara, and Dr. Mokichi Saito, who are the leaders of their own schools. The purpose of the MODERN JAPANESE POETS SERIES is to introduce them.

The present volume, the third of the series, includes a small but significant portion of the poems by Sachio Ito, who is a stranger to the West. For my text I followed the revised and enlarged edition of his collected work, published in 1931. The first one hundred and forty-four poems are in the classical form of thirty-one syllables, while the last six conform to the pattern of ancient odes. I have aimed at a scrupulously exact translation and have tried to retain

P R E F A C E

as far as possible the rhythm of the original. In rendering such subtle work as Sachio's in another medium, it is inevitable that some of the flavor should have evaporated. As a conscientious translator, however, I hope I have added and subtracted little. I have refrained from the use of rhyme, which necessarily hampers literalness and gives an air of artificiality.

To Lilian E. Knowles and Miss Agnes DeLano for many valuable suggestions, and to Mr. Alan Page Flavelle for the pen sketch of the author, I wish to express my deep indebtedness.

S. S.

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INTRODUCTION



A QUARTER of a century has passed since the death of Sachio Ito, and it is interesting to note that he has been a kind of fixed star in the Japanese poetic movement. Coming into prominence at a time when poetry was passing out of the hands of a few aristocratic versifiers into those of the populace, he emphasized, independently of the warfare in opposing camps, certain fundamental elements in the nature of poetry which were in danger of being obscured by the increasing tendency to treat poetry as a social document and to forget that it is an art. Though actively participating in the intellectual and artistic rebirth, Sachio, unlike some of his contemporaries, chose a more critical and a soberer path. There is none of that intellectual insolence and conscious break with tradition in his work which characterized the new poetry. Through a gradual process of synthesis, Sachio took from the past what he needed and could use, and moved forward into the present. It was this distinction that made

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him the vital link between the poetry of the past and present, and the acknowledged leader of the Araragi school.

Kojiro Ito, better known by his pen-name Sachio, was born on August 18, 1864, in Naruto, Kazusa Province, the youngest son of Ryosaku and Natsu Ito. Situated at the end of the fertile Kwanto Plain famous in Japanese history, Naruto is a small castle-town founded by Lord Yasumichi Ishikawa in 1590. Until the close of the nineteenth century, it remained a feudal citadel. For generations the Ito family owned in the outskirts of the town a small farm which yielded them a meagre living. The old thatched cottage with a grove of pine trees behind, a stream full of crawfish, the yellow rape-seed field that merged into the blue ocean, and the distant roar of the Pacific haunted Sachio years later when he began to dwell in the large city.

Sachio was the child of his parents' old age. As he wrote:

"My mother was father's second wife and married him rather late in life. My older brother and I were her only children, and as a child I remember well how gray her hair was."

There is a charming description of the family

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group from the recollection of his sixth year. On the eve of the beginning of the spring season, known as the *Setsubun* festival, Sachio came home late from his play and found a holly twig with a sardine head at the gate.

"After dinner we all sat around the hearth, and my father explained the significance of the festival. After the ceremony of scattering toasted beans to drive out devils, he picked up twelve beans from the floor and arranged them by the fire in a row. Counting from the right, they represented the twelve months of the year. As they burned, father explained that those that crumbled into white ash signified fair weather, while those that turned into black charcoal, rain. He said the weather that year was to be favorable to the crops, and we all rejoiced."

In the spring of 1873 Sachio was sent to a village school, where he proved to be an average country lad full of energy and spirit, but with no particular bent toward learning. In 1877, however, of his own will he became a pupil of Shumpo Sato, local scholar, under whom he acquired a comprehensive knowledge of Chinese classical literature. Farm life, family life, school life—all were simple, pleasant, and serene in that castle-town, but the political unrest and the changes brought about in Japan's contact with the West-

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ern world affected the young man deeply, and he wanted to seek his fortune in a wider world.

"At the age of seventeen, I went to Tokyo to study law as a preparation to go into politics. My tendency to argue even today, I am afraid, is a hangover from that experience. Within six months, however, I had to give up any idea of study, for my sight was fast failing."

A series of examinations by specialists disclosed that he was suffering from a serious case of progressive myopia, and he was told that his sight was like a cracked china bowl. If he used it with care, it might last him a long while; otherwise it would be gone. There was nothing now for him to do but to go back to his parents, who

"... did not consider my case serious. Many a man has been totally blind. If I were to be only near-sighted, I should consider myself very fortunate. There is, moreover, nothing strange for a farmer's son to be a farmer. In fact believing that now I would probably remain home contentedly, they were quite pleased."

Of his life during the succeeding four years we know little beyond the fact that he overcame his desire to go to America so that he might care for his aged parents.

"My mother then was almost sixty. Even if by happy chance she should live to be eighty, I had only

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twenty more years to serve and comfort her in her old age. To go away at that time to fulfil my personal ambition was out of the question. I made up my mind to accept my fate. Then strangely enough there welled up in me a profound sense of peace and joy."

In November, 1885, with only two *yen* in his pocket, he went to Tokyo, and became an apprentice in a dairy. Starting at the very bottom, he learned the trade of dairying, and in the spring of 1889 he was able to open his own business at No. 18 Kayabacho, Honjo Ward, Tokyo.

"Of course I had no capital to speak of and had to depend absolutely on my customers' good will and my own hard labor. I used to work eighteen hours or more a day, and won the reputation of being the hardest working man in my business."

Again:

"Going into business under such circumstances, people's kindness touched me deeply. It has often been said that the city folks are cold and mercenary, but I think differently. A man who loaned me some money said to me once: 'If you should fail after you worked so hard and be unable to pay me, I have no regret.' "

For Sachio, however, the period of trial and hardship was fast approaching its end. In November of the same year, he was married to Toku, oldest daughter of Juemon Ito of Kamisakai Vil-

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lage, a few miles from his native town. Though not quite eighteen, Toku's mature wisdom and efficiency provided that support and moral courage of which he was in need. They started their house-keeping in a new quarter behind the cowsheds, where his parents soon joined them.¹

The first twenty-nine years of Sachio's life, so far as the records show, are devoid of poetic activity. Yet, judging from his temperament and his thorough knowledge of classical poetry as well as poetics, his later work must have been the outgrowth of these earlier years. He would probably have been a poet in any age, but that in which he found himself was peculiarly favorable for the development and appreciation of his genius. The exuberant literary revolt against the artificiality and rigid convention of the eighties was falling into the unhealthy emotionalism of the nineties. Led by Tekkan and Akiko Yosano,² the romantic *Myōjo* school, preoccupied with new

¹ At last Sachio was in position to fulfil his earnest desire to provide for and comfort his parents in their old age. His mother died on March 2, 1904, at the age of seventy-three, while his father passed away in February, 1907, at the age of eighty-four.

² See the Introduction of Volume II of the present series, *Tangled Hair*.

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ideas and experiences, tended toward the self-indulgence of personal feeling and the display of wit. To an experienced critic, this romantic verse suffered from glaringly improper diction, artificial metaphors, and manufactured emotions. On the other hand, there was a small group headed by Shiki Masaoka (1867-1902) who advocated simplicity and sincerity. He cried over and over again: "Do not force yourself either in thoughts or expression. Be natural." This is, of course, the creative artist's hardest task. It means that good poetry consists not in the intensity or newness of emotion or thought, but rather in the intensity of the creative impulse disciplined by thought and experience. Needless to add, the two schools had little in common. Shiki thought it necessary to state his creed once and for all and from February 12 to March 4, 1898, he published a series of ten articles entitled "Letters to Poets," in the metropolitan newspaper *Nihon*.

The enthusiasm and penetrating critical sense with which Sachio read these articles is shown in his letters to Shiki, quoted in the *Nihon* of April 27 and May 3, together with Shiki's criticism. Sachio was already known in the Literary Section of the *Nihon*, for previously, on February

10, 23, and 24, he had published articles on the nature of poetry, stressing the importance of knowing its nature and function, rhythm as its distinguishing quality, and the dignity and integrity of poetry. His thesis was no mere argument of an inexperienced poet, but showed great critical discrimination, based on his knowledge of the historical course of Japanese poetry. In it we have the germ of the first full revaluation of poetry since the *Preface* to the *Kokinshu* by Ki no Tsurayuki in the early part of the tenth century.

Sachio's challenge to Shiki was soon to develop into profound admiration and sympathy, for these two writers shared surprisingly similar qualities of mind. There was in each a full understanding of the importance of discipline and craftsmanship, an equal insistence on the fusion of experience and reflection, which should be expressed in apt words without sacrificing their sound or sense. Each reacted against the copious expansiveness of his own age. Therefore, on January 3, 1900, Sachio called on Shiki who was confined in bed with tuberculosis and an affection of the spine, and with the sincerity and humility of a child became a pupil of Shiki. He writes:

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"Long before I called on Shiki, I was firmly convinced that he was the greatest master since the days of the *Manyō*³. Therefore, my joy at being able to come in close contact with his personality and receive his criticism knows no bounds. I felt virtually that I was pulled up to a higher level inch by inch."

Again:

"Under such circumstances, every utterance of Shiki absolutely held me spell-bound. In the monthly poetry gathering, how delighted I was if my poems met his approval and how dejected I felt when it was otherwise. I could not sleep one whole night when my poems were printed in the *Nihon*."

Shiki was in charge of the literary page of the *Nihon*, and the first printed poem by Sachio was

*To a sickle and spade
Hung under the newly-thatched eaves,
I tied the festive straw strands
And welcomed the New Year.*

The most significant poem, however, is his *Song of a Cowherd*, which marks his turning point and voices his aspirations:

*A cowherd impelled
To compose poems,*

³The earliest collection of Japanese poems, compiled in the middle of the eighth century.

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Quickens in the world

A marvelous new poetry.

Previous to this in the early part of 1899, a group of younger poets had rallied around Shiki, gathering monthly at his house and composing verse upon a given subject. This group is the origin of the famous *Negishi* Poetry Society which played such an important rôle in the subsequent history of the Japanese poetry. To the first gathering of 1900, Sachio came, and one of the members wrote:

“A big, fat man whose name was Sachio Ito came, but we paid little attention to him.”

Another person recorded:

“Sachio had no education, and at Shiki’s he was the laughing stock of the whole group.”

As he freely admitted, Sachio was truly a cow-herd and paid little attention to his external appearance. He was so extremely nearsighted that he had to wear two pairs of heavy glasses to see anything at all, which gave him an uncouth appearance. He was very tall and stout; his contemporaries regarded him as enormous. Altogether he was not prepossessing, especially to smart and refined city people. Shiki, who was

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three years Sachio's junior, was nevertheless great enough to see beneath the surface and appreciate this strange genius. It is interesting to note that seven poems of Sachio's with Shiki's corrections have come down to us in manuscript, and except in one or two instances we cannot consider the corrections to be any improvement. Sachio's reads:

*When I sip the tea of Uji,
Tenderly I recall the melodies
Sung by the maidens of Uji
Who were picking tea-leaves.*

Shiki's corrected version reads:

*When I sip the tea of Uji
In the land of Yamashiro,
I recall songs of the maidens
Who were picking tea-leaves in Uji.*

Sachio's admiration of Shiki knew no bounds, and with almost pathetic intensity he strove toward the high goal set by his teacher. When "Waterfall" was set as the subject of the monthly gathering, he made a trip to Nikko to see the famous falls, and for "Pines" he visited Okitsu, where old, knotty pine trees line the beautiful sandy shore. His "New Theory of Poetry" in the

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*Kokoro no Hana*⁴ is an epoch-making treatise, in which the thesis is the same he had held before he met Shiki—that the essential function of poetry is not intellectual but emotional. Good poetry is not the result of an outpouring of personal emotion, but an expression of thought and feeling realized through a set of objects, a situation, or a chain of events. Hence he stresses the utmost importance of the faculty of seeing things as they really are, apart from imposed conventions, and concentration of mind as the necessary means of gaining accurate and precise expression. Japanese poetry since the *Kokin-shu*⁵ had degenerated into a slavish following of set conventions and formalized technique. Love was always cruel, the zephyr always melted the nightingale's frozen tears, and the silvery dewdrops were always jewels. Shiki fought against and successfully tore down the accepted structure of poetic theory and practice, but he was too ill to begin any reconstruction, and the task of providing a new technique and a new convention fell to Sachio. What makes his criti-

⁴ A journal of poetry edited by Nobutsuna Sasaki, v. 4 nos. 3-6, March-June, 1901.

⁵ An anthology of poetry compiled by Ki no Tsurayuki in the early tenth century.

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cism so enduring 'is that he was not merely a theorist, but a craftsman talking of what he knew at first hand.

Soon Sachio published in the same journal a second series of articles on the "New Theory of Poetry."⁶ Like a sonnet sequence in the West, Japanese classical poems of thirty-one syllables frequently came in sequence, but each poem was always considered as independent. Almost accidentally, Shiki discovered a new method of composing upon one subject a series of poems organically related, and again it was Sachio who successfully tried it out in his creative work. He compares it with landscape gardening.

"A dignified old tree can stand alone in the garden. So, a long lay can fully express complex thoughts and emotions. But with smaller shrubs, it is best to group them in an harmonious whole, and a series of poems on the same subject, each voicing its different phases, clusters together naturally."

This method of composition was used effectively by such able poets as Akahiko Shimaki, Mokichi Saito, and others, and it gave their work an extraordinary wholeness and integrity.

⁶ November, 1901, to May, 1902; v. 4 nos. 11-12, v. 5 nos. 1-5.

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The death of Shiki on September 19, 1902, was a bitter blow to Sachio and the Negishi group. Without their leader, the members began to drift away. Lamenting this sad state, Sachio, Takashi Nagatsuka (1879-1915), and a few others gathered the scattering group and in June, 1903, founded a journal, *Ashibi*. Until it was discontinued in January, 1908, with the thirty-second issue, Sachio was its editor-in-chief with the editorial office at his house. Almost all Sachio's poems as well as his critical essays in these years were published in the *Ashibi*. He was also writing idyllic novelettes, which appeared serially in various magazines and newspapers. With a little more leisure of mind and body, Sachio now was able to devote his time to the cult of tea. His new experiences in other fields of literature and art and his association with brilliant younger poets enriched his verse. Just as he and others had previously gathered around Shiki, they now met at Sachio's house every month, discussing and composing poems.

More and more Sachio showed strong indignation toward the *Myōjō* school with their wild intoxication, their "artiness," and their abysmal ignorance of the poetic tradition. In March,

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1906, he published a criticism of Akiko in the *Ashibi*. His contention was first that a poet must constantly synthesize and harmonize the experiences of life. Secondly, good poetry consists of wisely chosen words in excellent arrangement and excellent metre. He quotes Akiko's poem on the nightingales:

*In the spring rain
The young nightingales
Sing in the nest
Made of my fallen hair.*

The nest made with her fallen hair caught her fancy, and at once she manufactured the spring rain and the young birds. As an example of her lack of precision and synthesis, he takes the following poem which was praised highly by the critics:

*Oh Kamakura!
Though a Buddha,
What a handsome chap is Sakyamuni.
The summer's grove!*

"Let us," says Sachio, "transfer this into an ordinary conversation. A guest says to the host: 'What a clever chap your young son is! The pine

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trees in the garden.' What do you think the host would think?"

Indeed, Sachio learned early in his poetic career to appreciate the dual nature of a word's power. It can enchant as well as betray, and only mastering every resource in word and rhythm, can one transmute his personal experience into something rich and impersonal. Finally:

"Whether in poetry, prose, or any form of plastic art, a man cannot produce anything better than what he really is. The style cannot be separated from the personality."

The following few years were eventful for Sachio. A new journal, *Araragi*, was founded in October, 1908, and he was virtually its editor-in-chief till his death in 1913. For some time he had been deeply in love, an experience poignantly expressed in his poetry and one which finally reached its breaking point about this time. A series entitled *My Life* in 1911 and *Dark Hair* in the following year are its result, and in the *Light of Decay* one feels a certain foreboding. Furthermore, his young pupils, Akahiko and Mokichi and others, had been drifting into a new trend to which Sachio himself could not subscribe, and this undoubtedly saddened him. It was, how-

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ever, the greatness of this man to live through any bitter experience and attain a higher spiritual level.

The period of storm and strife was over by 1910. He had quietly borne the death of his father and mother, and the tragic death of his little daughter. In the spring of 1910, a tea-arbor was built in the small garden of his house in Honjo. The timber used was the gift of his friend, Shinichiro Warabi (1876-1922), who appears in the *Keeper of the Hills*. Retiring here, Sachio found the solace and spiritual peace which he had long sought in vain. Here all the disturbing problems of his life found their own solution, and he was determined to dedicate the remaining years of his life to the service of the muse. This singleness of purpose made him unwilling to confine his efforts to one style, but impelled him from one discovery to another. In such essays as "Expression and Presentation," "Life of New Poetry," and "Cries" which discuss the use of exclamation in lyric poetry, he touches upon the most profound problems in poetry. They are valuable as the by-product of his quest for truth and permanent value.

In April, 1912, the dairy was moved from

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Honjo to Kameido. After oft-repeated calamities of flood, this move was a happy one. In June, his oldest daughter was married, and the following summer Sachio was a grandfather. In the spring of 1913, the family finally moved to new quarters at Kameido, leaving only his tea-arbor where he often returned to meditate. Both his prose and poetry at this period express a sense of great relief, and his mind seemed to reach out to another higher synthesis. But it was to be cut off suddenly. On July 30, at two in the morning, he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and passed away at six o'clock that evening. On August 2, he was buried in the Fumoin Temple in Kameido.

Sachio's writings were not collected in his life-time, but in 1920, his pupils gathered his work and published the *Complete works of Sachio Ito*. In 1931, his verse and essays on poetry were published in four volumes.

Soseki Natsume (1867-1916), the greatest modern novelist, once wrote to a friend:

"The truth is a man like Sachio cannot talk about poetics. Worshipping Shiki to the point of absurdity, he is composing silly poems for dear life."

Soseki was not alone in that sentiment; Sachio

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was not learned in the popular sense. Without realizing that he himself was a far better poet than Shiki who died comparatively young, he strove to reach the goal set by his master. Though unbending in what he held in his poetic tenets to be true, he was always so humble in mind that an unceasing growth kept him young in spirit, and whatever idea or experience he gleaned, he in due time elevated in a higher synthesis. Moreover, he took poetry seriously and held it in profound veneration. He wrote poems for dear life, and through that sublimation of himself to something so far beyond himself, he truly achieved a personal immortality.

SONGS OF A COWHERD

~ 1897-1898 ~

AUTUMN COLORS IN MISTS

Now brightening and now fading
Over the hills with trailing mists,
The autumn leaves of myriad hues
Forever change before my eyes.

A RETREAT WITH A NIGHTINGALE

Though I dwell alone,
With a singing nightingale
Morning and evening as a friend,
I am not lonely.

COLD MOON

Leaving to the plum tree alone
The sign of the awakening spring,
The moonlight still remains
In its wintry gloom.

SUMMER MOUNTAINS

When the summer comes,
The fresh green of young leaves 'seems so cool
The mountains cast off
Their garments of mist.

DAWN

Frightening away my dream
At dawn,
The fishermen call each to each.
I think
They are riding out to sea.

A SONG OF A COWHERD

A cowherd impelled
To compose poems,
Quickens in the world
A marvelous new poetry.

THE NEW YEAR

To a sickle and spade
Hung under the newly-thatched eaves,
I tied the festive straw strands
And welcomed the New Year.

SPRING RAIN

For two whole days
The spring rain has fallen,
And in the garden patch by my kitchen door,
The green spears of onions
Have lined themselves in rows.

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

When I look upon the cherry blossoms
That flash upon the hillside
In the gleam of the bright sun,
I think longingly of the age of the gods.

CHERRY BLOSSOMS (*continued*)

In a glen between the mountains
Tiring to the feet,
There stands a lonely hut,
And by the thatched eaves,
A cherry tree in full bloom.



On the shore where fisher-lads
Tug at the ropes of the net,
When the wind blows high,
Cherry bloom falls in wild confusion.



To mark the great imperial reign,
Bridle to bridle,
The lords and high councilors ride
To the feast of cherry blossoms.



Heavy with the fumes
Of festive wine,
A noble courtier
Falls from his horse,
Scattering cherry blossoms.

AT THE YOSHINO GARDEN

(June first)

By a plum tree
Poppies bloom;
Under the pines
Thistles flowering—
A cottage built of straw.



Red, crimson red,
Are the poppies.
Bathed in the evening sun,
They are aflame.

(Again, June 20)

Over the marsh
Where the flowering iris
Stands out white in relief,
A lone glow-worm
Flickers.

THE FEAST OF LANTERNS

'Tis the evening
The honored spirits of the dead
Come to call,
And all the length of the street,
The lotus lanterns are lighted.



Just as the Welcome Fire for the dead
Was lighted by the gate,
Alas! the rain came down
And put it out.

ELEGY ON MY CHILD

Over the dark and weary way,
O Buddhas of the Three Spheres,
Pray, watch over my child,
One so young and sinless,
That nought may harm him!

FULL MOON

(On September 13th I visit a friend on the bank
of the Sumida River)

“Go home I must,” so saying I rose,
And all at once in the thicket
The crickets began to chirp merrily,
And the moon slipped behind
A thin veil of clouds.



From a narrow rift in the clouds
A broken moonbeam quavers
Over the ears of knot-weeds
By the roadside.

~ 1901 ~

SPRING SHORE

(February 23 at the plum garden in Sugita)

Were it not for my love
Who awaits me at home,
I, too, would be a hunter by the sea
Searching for shells!*

PEONIES IN THE RAIN

Having gone out with a light
To see the peony blossoms
Bathed in rain,
I ended by getting thoroughly wet.

LOTUS POND

All night long,
In rain and in darkness,
Over the lotus pond
A lantern of the keeper
Swings in the wind.

*To go shell-gathering at low tide in early spring is one of the annual events in Japan.

WISTERIA BLOOM

Fearing the wisteria of Kameido
Is about to pass,
On this rainy day, umbrella in hand,
I come alone to view it.



The water in the pond
Is so turbid that
It reflects not the waves of the wisteria
And the rain it rains.



As it rains,
No one comes to see;
In vain the wisteria
Pours out its lovely waves of bloom.

LOTUS FLOWERS

(August 8)

I put in the alcove
A vase of pink lotus flowers
And the house is filled with their scent.



As if to say
Things of the world
Come to nought in the end,
A petal of a lotus bloom
Begins to fall.

AT THE TEMPLE YARD

On the face of a stone monument
Where Basho's lyric is carved,
Basket-worms crawl.

BUCKWHEAT FLOWERS

By the fields of corn and millet
Where autumnal decay holds its sway,
The field of buckwheat is in full bloom.

THE PEACH GARDEN AT FUJIZUKA

O peach blossoms!

Does man come so rarely to see you?

Without a boatman

The ferry lies aslant.



“Ferry ahoy!” I call,

And from behind the peach tree,

A lad, emerging,

Descends to the boat.



By the edge of the barley field

The peach trees bloom;

Under the flower-laden branches

My ferry lands.

SPRING MISCELLANY

To no purpose

I went down to my garden,
And alas, frightened away
A nightingale in the thicket.



The crumbling walls

I mended today.

The color of wet plaster is lovely—
I wish it would never dry.

~ 1903 ~

SPRING RAIN

What peace and comfort
The spring rain, pattering, brings!
My thoughts hover on the banks
Of a stream in my native village
Where oft I fished for crabs.

FROGS

As I grind the tea,
In the pool within my hedge,
Frogs croak this spring night.

~

Tempted by their cries
I pause in my grinding of tea
And think about a new poem.

EARLY SUMMER

Some horse-beans
I chanced to plant in my garden;
Now their pods are growing fat;
Summer has come.

A PINE TREE IN MY GARDEN

As the autumnal gale, blowing,
Shakes the trunk,
Needles fall in the scouring-rush.

MUSHROOM GATHERING

In color and in scent
Lovely are the gathered mushrooms.
Tenderly I put them in my basket
That they be not broken nor crushed.

MOUNT FUJI

On a pillow of blue clouds
Clad in silvery snow,
The guardian deity of Mount Fuji
Lies forever asleep.

~ 1904 ~

ARISE, YOUTH OF JAPAN

(On the eve of the Russo-Japanese War)

Oh the burnished sword
 Handed down from the age of the gods!
The time has come to lay our hands
 On this sword divine.

(On the eve of the declaration of war)

By the decree of my sovereign lord
 I go, leaving my aged parents,
 My wife and my children,
And will not turn me around
 Even to gaze behind.

~

My child and my young wife
 Pressing me on either side,
 Come to see me off to war.
Though in my blood I weep,
 My eyes are dry.

LAMENT OF A SOLDIER'S WIFE

Come! I will ask thee,
Wild geese of the sky,
Of the autumn field in Cathay's land
Where in his grave my beloved lies.



My only love on this earth,
I shall see no more;
Where he lies buried, I know not.
How, indeed, can I call myself his wife?

A WOMAN'S LAMENT

(Composed for a lady to be sent to her cruel husband)

"Surely he will come tonight,"
So saying I watched many a night
Pale to dawn without having met my love.
Drawing my child close to my breast,
I weep.



Like to a wreath of smoke
Untouched by winds,
How shall I curb my love
That rushes with singleness of purpose
To you, its goal?

JOURNEY TO SHINANO PROVINCE

(November 23)

The evening is bitter cold;
Though I must go out of my way,
I shall pay homage at the Enrin Temple
As a memento of my journey.

(November 26)

As the evening sun emerged brightly
And the rainbow, too, appeared,
We rowed out;
But lo! Over Lake Suwa
Sweeps the autumn shower again.

(November 27)

As a stranger comes seeking for
The hot spring of Tateshina,
At every turn of the country road
A stone Buddha guides his way.

BRIDGE

A man on the bridge
And one below washing a horse
Chat happily.

I wonder if they are rejoicing
In the year's abundant crops.

A MOUNTAIN TEMPLE

A morning at the mountain temple
Is fascinating . . .
Through the windless air
White clouds come dancing in the yard.

A NOTE TO A FRIEND

Pray, make me a gift
Of a *sazanka* branch
Which I once spied in your garden!
Today I hold in my tea-arbor
A warming of the hearth.

TEA-ARBOR

When by the hearth I place
A potted plum tree,
Steam from the boiling kettle
Trails by its branches.

A PLUM TREE

Tormented by thoughts
From which I found no release,
I wandered out of the house
And visited a plum tree
In a nearby temple yard.

A CHARCOAL BURNER

By nightfall I fear
It will turn into rain.
The smoke of a charcoal burner
Hovers very low over the woods.

A COWHERD

When I hold out my hand
 To a calf,
As if to suckle
 At its mother's breast,
 It sucks my fingers.



When I come
 With a bucket full of milk,
 To feed a young calf,
How he rubs against me and follows me about!
 My sweet calf!



I set my young calf free.
With his tail high in the air,
How he runs and bounds
About the yard in circles!

SPRING TIME

Tempted by the croaking frogs
And the beautiful moonlight,
I sought at the dead of night
The shadows of a pagoda tree.

MY GARDEN

My garden is only sixty feet square,
Yet though I dwell in the city,
The spring brings a bullfinch's song
And the summer, a warbler's note.

EARLY WINTER

Not a single fly in the house!
The winter, when we yearn
For a little warmth of the sun, has come.



The pistils of the white chrysanthemum have
reddened;
Crickets no longer sing;
The morning with frost is still.

YAWATA SHRINE IN KATSUSHIKA

(Through the avenue of a thousand Gingko trees)

Large gingko trees
Surrounding the shrine
Reflect the evening glow
And are dazzlingly bright.



Though it is called a town,
Houses are few and scattered;
At dusk none walks the street;
Stars alone gleam over the sacred grove.

STILLNESS

Heaven and earth
Have sunk in deep sleep;
And the night is far spent.
Over the ocean's expanse
The moon is vermillion red.

SPREADING ARMS

I am so busy
I begrudge even a moment;
But when my child rushes to me
With her arms spread,
I really must take her up.

❧ 1906 ❧

A RAKUYAKI BOWL*

(January 20, at the house of Mr. Fumoto Oka)

A foolish fellow in this world
Gazes on a bowl of *rakuyaki*
And all by himself
Sheds tears of joy.

❧

To speak so fondly
Of a *rakuyaki* bowl
In this day and age
Is, indeed, like inviting the blind
To come to see a picture.

*A famous pottery ware of Kyoto which was originated by Jokei Sasaki (d. 1609), son of a naturalized Korean. It is especially prized by tea-masters.

ON A JOURNEY

Unable to sleep
My ears become sharp
And close by the yard
I hear plainly
A horse feeding.



For the second time
Awakening from an early morning dream,
I hear in the kitchen
The sound of starting a fire.

PIETY

Of all my thoughts,
Reciting in my prayer
Only the very sad thoughts,
I fell soundly asleep.

A MIMOSA TREE

On this eve as I watch
A spider weaving its web
On withered mimosa leaves,
The sadness of waning autumn
Fills my heart.

~ 1907 ~

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

Isles of the dragon fly*
That, on the map, can be
Gathered in the palm of the hand!
At thy curious strength
The world is quaking.

GRAPEFRUIT

Foolishly I bought
Two enormous grapefruit;
Since they will not
Go into my sleeves,
I am embarrassed by them.

~

Who says Sachio,
The cowherd poet,
Has a face that resembles
A grapefruit?

*One of the ancient poetic names of Japan, given to the country on account of a supposed resemblance in shape to that insect.

EARLY SUMMER

To close my eyes and think
Is painful
I shall turn my thoughts
To summer when nature
Is young and stirring.

PRIMROSES BY THE SHORE

At heaven's high boundary
Clouds are sinking;
On the shore where I stand,
Sails are returning.



As with two children beside me
I walk along the shore
Where primroses bloom,
The setting sun steeps
The clouds in splendor.



White clouds and the clouds
Shot by the setting sun, alike,
Are vanishing in the dusk . . .
The sun now sets in its stillness.

FLOOD

To see if it is still rising,
I mark the water on the front door
And am full of uneasiness.



As I look through the window
Below my eyes on the face of the waters,
Shadows of the stars are afloat.



The western sky is breaking,
And the clouds are clearing.
The water, too, has abated a little.
Tonight how tasty is my supper!

IN MEMORIAM

A day is followed by a day,
And in earth's diurnal course
The spring, by spring.
In the world of men, alas, I shall not meet
Those that are no more.

WAITING

Since the early hours of morning,
Girding up my dress,
I, a husky man, have dusted the benches
And swept the terrace
To welcome you.



Now the day is nigh spent;
The shadows of the trees lengthen in the garden;
Within the tea-water boils in vain.

~ 1908 ~

FESTIVAL OF STARS*

The evening of the Festival of Stars
Is fast approaching.
But, alas, when shall I be able
To see you face to face?

~

“When autumn comes,
Surely I shall come,”
So you have promised,
And that autumn begins this very night.

~

The first autumn wind rises
And wrings my heart tonight.
Thinking of you, my beloved,
I whisper to the flowers.

*According to an old legend, on the right bank of the Milky Way there dwelt a weaver, Vega, who made garments for the offspring of God. One day God took compassion on her loneliness, and gave her in marriage to a herdboy, Aquila, who dwelt on the opposite bank. Whereupon the Weaver began to grow slack in her work, and God in his anger made her recross the river, only allowing her to meet her husband once a year on the seventh night of the seventh moon, known as the Festival of Stars.

FESTIVAL OF STARS (*continued*)

O Heavenly River!
If only my love like thine
Need not be hidden from human eyes,
I shall not lament.



There is a means of
Cleaving stones and cutting steel,
But there is no way of damming
The surging waves of the human heart.

THOUGHTS ADRIFT

Looking up to the sky
Where the wind sighs
In the pagoda tree,
I think of the age of the stars
That know no age.

A STREAM OF THOUGHTS

A thousand and one thoughts
Stream through me
And wear my heart away.
Would that my heart had
A switch to turn them off!

OUR BURDEN

Carrying seven children
In our four arms of parents,
We climb the steep hill of life.

OUR TREASURE

No silken dress we wear;
No delicacy we taste;
But playing with the children,
Our soul is contented.

LOVE

My thoughts well up in me
As numerous as autumn weeds
But unable to give them utterance
I only shake them off like the dewdrops
That cling upon my hands.

PEPPER PRESERVE

Deep sinks the night,
And tranquil is the house
Where I cook pepper preserve.
Across the skylight
Darts a shooting star.

WINTER FIELDS

Over the field by the shore

When the wind blows high, the sand rises.
Fearing the young barley may be blown away,
A woman, treading, steadies its roots.

~*~

Horse-beans and barley, too,

Are huddled, freezing,

But plum trees that know the spring,
Make ready to bloom.

REASON

Since I do not live
By reason alone,
The correct logic men expound
Saves me not.

SMOKE

O the smoke that trails
Over the rustling leaves of the grove!
My beloved surely
Is preparing her morning meal.

MY PLIGHT

So anxious to forgive
That I await in anguish,
But alas! he asks me not for forgiveness.
To whom shall I bemoan my sad plight?

PLUM GARDEN

So dazzlingly white the blossoms,
So blue the sky,
And so dank the earth—
Yet so tranquil is the plum garden.

CLOUDS

O the manifold mountain peaks!
Would that I might flee
From the land of the living
To hide in thy inmost bosom
Veiled by a thousand folds of cloud!



Unable to forsake the ties
That bind me to wife and children
And to fulfil my heart's yearning,
Upon the mountain peaks shrouded in clouds
I gaze in vain.

A DUCK

Over a duck that sleeps
With his bill tucked
In his untidy wing of down,
Blows gently the spring breeze.

FLOATING WATER-WEEDS

(On the first anniversary of Nanaye who was drowned
in the garden pond)

Holding high the tablet with her name—
Once my daughter,
Now a Bodhisattva—
Reverently I ushered her
Into my new abode.



The pool of our woes was filled
And is no more;
Yet the tangles of floating weeds
Vanish not from my sight.



With fear, grief, and remorse,
For eight times ten
I encircled the dark waters of the pool,
But not even her sandals could I find.



None may mourn for thee,
But to our life's end
We shall yearn for thee and guard thee,
Thy father and mother!

AN ESCAPE

Fleeing awhile
From the cares of living,
I walk into the spring light
Where the plum trees flower,
And take a deep breath.

A CLEAR NIGHT

On such an enticing night,
A woman, by way of pretext, may say:
"I will go out to get
A thing or two for my kitchen."
But really it is to meet her love.

FLOOD

In the black darkness
The night is advancing.
Over the torrent echo
Cries for help and the lowing of cows.



Since the flood, we are still
Unable to return home,
And in our temporary shelter
The autumn has grown cold.

MY LIFE

If, to this present I,
To lie were not permitted,
My life span, alas, would be
Cut off this instant.



Tormented, I cling to life,
And there is no way to repent
Of the sin that men do not forgive.



Having been utterly lost
In the path of life,
I am not even permitted to lie.



When I repent of my own sin,
What will become of my life?
Alas, my love!



Though I huddle in fear and misery,
Since I am still alive,
Heaven and earth let me live.

WINTER GLOOM

Going out from the back door,
There is nothing to see.
Coldly the dull sun sets
O'er the withered reeds.

DARK HAIR

That together this one night
We may weep over life's woes
And mourn our fate,
I have come in the rain.



On the leaves of the clematis by the eaves,
Raindrops sound from time to time;
In the room men are silent,
And the night sinks deeply.



Filled with sorrow that rends our souls,
We sit speechless;
But unable to bear it any longer,
I take your hand and rise.

MY SON

(Kyuichiro, who died after thirteen days of life)

Fearful
I drew myself close to thee
And listened;
But there was no more breath.

MY SON (*continued*)

Thy tender soul,
More frail than a flickering light,
Touched lightly the mortal world
To be forever put out.

LIGHT OF DECAY

Descending I am astonished
At the cold of this morning.
The dew is heavy,
And deep are the fallen leaves of the
persimmons.



How cold is the morning dew!
O autumn flowers,
All is shrouded
In the dim light of decay.



Swaying the coxcombs' crimson red,
The autumn waxes to its close, and ah,
My forty-ninth year
Is about to pass.

~ 1913 ~

MY TREASURE

How joyous my little children are!
Not knowing how poor their father is,
Their voices are carefree and gay.



On a warm spring night
When it gently rains,
I gather my children in a room
And promise them a cherry-viewing party.



When my innocent ones
With their bright ruddy cheeks
Press about me,
How, indeed, can I complain
That I am poor?

SILENT HOUSE

Seven children of mine
Have gone out to play;
With a vase of camellias
I sit alone in the house.

SILENT HOUSE (*continued*)

Thinking it dead,
I brushed a fly off the screen,
But falling on the mat
It began to squirm.



I felt something amiss,
And now I know . . .
The locomotive factory
Is closed today.

PLUM BLOSSOMS

The guests having departed,
The twilight is lonely.
Beneath the plum tree
I stand alone, a sharp wind
On my burning face.



The frozen earth crackles
Under my tread;
Bending beneath the vaulted boughs,
I cast the white plum blossoms
Against the dark sky.

LONGER LAYS

A CHARCOAL SCUTTLE OF OLD GOURD

1901

ON THE HILLSIDE, the autumn leaves are bright;
Across the rice-field, wild geese's flight;
The hoar-frost is biting cold.

Then, lo! the abode of an old man,
Very fond of his tea,
Assumes at once its wintery mien.

By the hearth a scuttle of old gourd
Filled mountain high with charcoal;
A pair of steel tongs with a mulberry handle;

A brush of an eagle's tail feathers;
And the old man sits the livelong day
By his boiling kettle in a silent room.

DETAINED BY THE STORM

(Lines composed at Chigura in Awa Province)

1901

AT DAYBREAK and in the dusk, in vain,
My aged mother waits for me,
And my four children, my darlings,
Must be mourning my late return.

Thoughts of them fill my heart with pain.
Would I might soar with the heavenly clouds
And behold them once again!
But, being no bird, I am unable to fly.

My restless sleep on a grass-pillow
Whets the woes of a traveller.
To add to my misery, the night is dark
Shrouding the sea and hills in black gloom.

A thousand billows beat the shore;
The rain it rains in ceaseless torrents.
Like to the rippling shoals of a cascade,
My sad thoughts of home increase.

DETAINED BY THE STORM

But, unable to turn me round,
I tarry, finding solace in my loving wife
Who will comfort my aged mother
Till the ocean bears me home.

A KEEPER OF THE HILLS

1905

WARABI of Kamifusa oft says:

“Mine is the soul of the cryptomeria.
Soothed is my soul with its sight;
Joyous is my heart with the hills.
Yearly I plant eight thousand cryptomeria.
Thus I shall end my life,
I, a keeper of the hills.”

A COWHERD

1905

I, A MILKMAN,
 Know no other way.
At two I rise
 To milk for the morning.
At one, again,
 I milk for the evening.

My cows I care for
 Tenderly.
With combs of steel and bristle
 I brush them daily.
With animal smell
 My clothes must stink.
 Poor Sachio!

ON THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY
OF SHIKI'S DEATH

1905

IN THIS LIFE of a waking-dream,
Two years already have gone,
And thrice the autumn has come.

In the garden hoary, drenched in rain,
The coxcombs and the begonias
Bloom, but only in name,
And the amaranth is no more.

No bird twitters in the cage;
The gourd trellis is rotten and torn;
Even the songs of insects
By the cedar hedge are desolate.

SPRING SONG

1908

ON A SMALL FARM of reddish clay soil
Away from men, I am alone.
Nigh behind the house in a bamboo thicket,
A grove of tall pines rises stately.
The hearth smoke lingering by the eaves
And the distant roars of waves to me are quieting.
'Tis the spring, mulberry trees marshalling new
shoots.

Nightingales, white-eyes, and buntings
Come and go, attaching themselves to men.
Cows in the yard are suckling their young;
The dog, worn out from play, lies curled;
Raising sand and dust, hens prowl.
Yonder on the moor, dotted with low growths,
My two children gather water-cresses.

My love, nightmare of the fleeting world, I forget;
My vain hope of a name is vanished.
In the shed silkworms are turning in cocoons.
"We shall keep close watch and be diligent,"

SPRING SONG

Whisper two sisters to their mother.
There is a joy in the toil of living.
Laying aside my pen, I, too, will pick mulberry
leaves.

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Songs of a cowherd

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